PITTSBURGH FAN FORUM

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CLUB BUSINESS

PITTCON '77: The PCC's third annual full scale comics con is coming this month, and we hope everybody's ready! To recap the major stuff,

Dates: April 22-23-24. All those helping in seeting up should arrive around 8:00 AM, Friday morning. Hours: 1000 - 6:00 for the dealer rooms and such .

Where: The Hotel Webster Hall, in Oakland, on Fifth Ave. Please note that this is a new location-- the con has moved from Duquesne University to the HOTEL WEBSTER HALL.

Price: Admission is now $1.50 per day at the door, or $4.00 for all three days in advance. All PCC'ers should have paid in advance! Dealer's space is almost gone— now $20 per table.

Who: Guests: E. Nelson Bridwell, Jim Shooter, Howard P. Siegel, Len Wein, Dave Cockrum, Keith Pollard, Howard Bender. Unfortunately, Steve Gerber had to cancel last month. Sorry.

What: In addition to the regular program of films, dealers, panels, slide shows, workshops, and stuff, Pittsburgh Comix Club members only will be able to participate in a "headstart" session (10:00 to noon, Friday, before the general public is admitted), a special party Friday night, a dinner with the guests of honor, and the Lou Pascazi Hat Eating (see last ish).

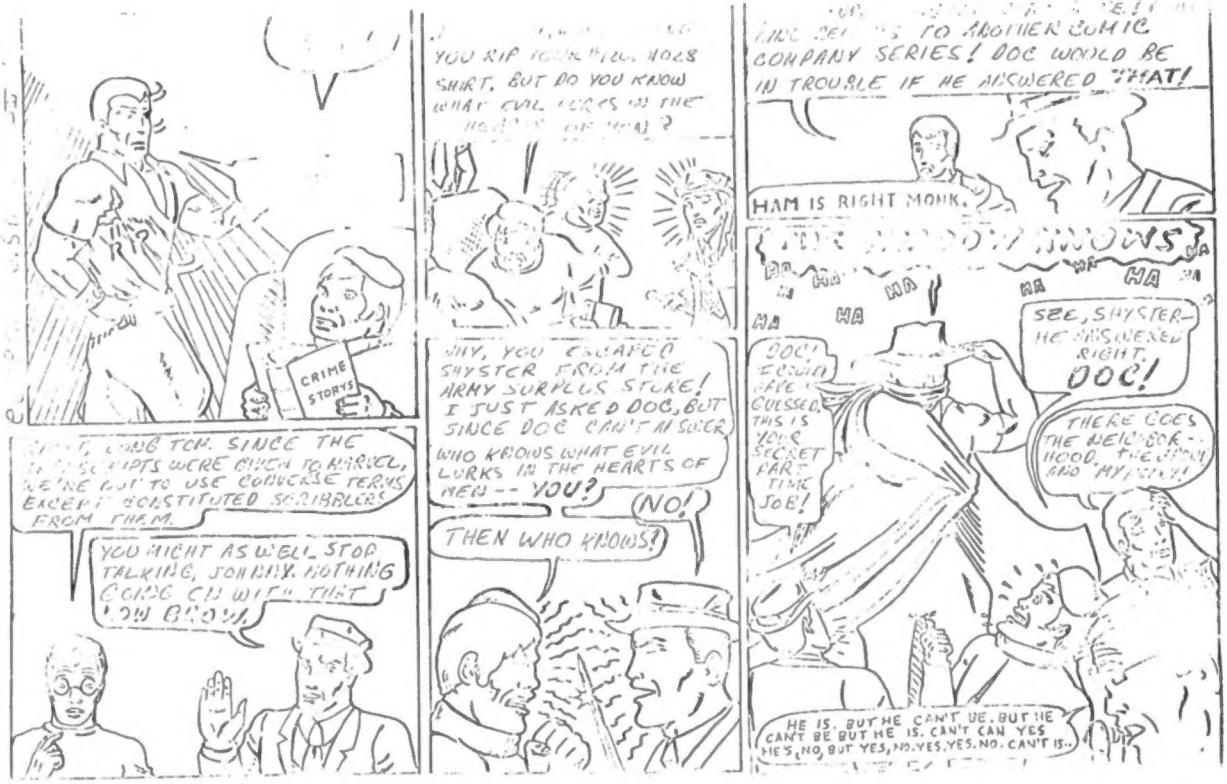
Everyone who has promised their support and work during the con must deliver to make this year's PITTCON as smooth and successful as last year's. If anyone has any questions or needs directions and more information, see previous issues of PFF, or contact Ben Pondexter at 681-1268.

Personal: Congratulations to Marv and Michele Wolfman on the arrival of their baby girl, and to our own Paul Sentner on his photography exhibition during the month of March. We heard that they were both successes!

Other conventions: Instead of the New York Comic Art Con in July, several club members are thinking about attending the San Diego Con this summer. Though expensive, this is one of the most prestigious cons around, and we'd be interested to see who could attend. And remember, if anyone wants to get a group together to attend any other conventions during the year (such as the Detroit con), then please let it be known at the next meeting.

Plug: DATELINE : COMICDOM has been one of the top fanzines, and an institution in fandom, for many years. Currently, it's being handled quite well by one Mike Raub, a good friend and cohort. If you're interested in this excellent zine, send 30¢ (or $1 for four issues) to Mike Raub / 3663 Elmore Court /Columbus, Ohio 43224. Tell him who sent you!

PITTCON '77


CRIME STORYS
YOU MIGHT AS WELL STOP TALKING, JOHNNY. NOTHING GOING ON WITH THAT LOW BROW.
WHY, YOU ESCAPED SHYSTER FROM THE ARMY SURPLUS STORE! I JUST ASKED DOC, BUT SINCE DOC CAN'T ANSWER
WHO KNOWS WHAT EVIL LURKS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN -- YOU?
(NO!)
THEN WHO KNOWS?
HAM IS RIGHT MONK.
HA HA HA
SEE, SHYSTER- HE WAS WRONG RIGHT. DOC!
DOC! I THINK I'VE GUESSED. THIS IS YOUR SECRET PART-TIME JOB!
THERE GOES THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD, THE JOINT AND MY NERVES!
HE IS. BUT HE CAN'T BE. BUT HE CAN'T BE BUT HE IS. CAN'T CAN YES HE'S, NO, BUT YES, NO. YES. YES. NO. CAN'T IS..

Random Notes On The Pulps

by Howard Siegel

Both radio and pulps have one thing common. They make you use your ind. You must be casting director, ound effects man, producer, actors, cenerists, etc. And in doing all these ings, the wonderment of both media oon becomes apparent. You are part f it all. Their modern counterparts, elevision and comic books, do not al- ow you such lat itudes of pleasure.

One of the favorite comments in vriting about pul ps is that they ori- ginated all the heroes that followed. Buck Rogers, The Shadow, Doc Savage, et al. But not many make mention of the fact that many of the writers, editors, and publishers came from the pulps. Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger were super science fiction fans in the thirties. Otto Binder, Manny Wade Wellman, Edmund Hamilton, wrote themselves into the hall of fame. Even Virgil Finlay applied his mystic pen to the pages of comic books when his coffer was empty. This group is well represented in early issues of Mystery In Space, Strange Adventures, and Tales of the Unexpected. Before Martin Goodman ventured into comics, he had a profitable pul p empire which took its own formats, titles, artists, and writers, and applied this corps to the picture version of his publishing house. Marvel Mystery #1 was in fact from the cover of a pulp magazine which was changed so that it could be used to introduce the Human Torch and company to the kids. Only the artist had no idea what the lead character looked like. He had only the name. Thus the fiery figure burning through a wall was quite different from the android drawn in the origin story in 1939. Until Alex Shomberg began to do most of the covers, the early issues of Marvel and other comics looked much like pulps.

I read once a tale that claimed the existence of three issues of an unnamed pulp which contained the exact origin of Superman. It was said to have been published two or three years before Siegel and Schuster created their Man of Steel. Two copies are locked in DC's vaults, the third in the safe deposit box of an oil company executive in California who steadfastly refuses to sell it to Warner Communications. No comment. I leave the analysis of that story to others.

Science fiction, of course, is the major theme to have caught on from the pulps. Many books have been written, and I've found that almost all of them use the same issues of the same titles somewhere in their picture sections to illustrate the topic's history. It's as if a small clique is trying to establish, via the artistic endeavors of others, a Madison Avenue hype to proclaim the most valuable pulps of all. Bob Weinberg, the well-known dealer and pulp specialist, will be one of the first to dispute such a "schtick." In fact, trying to establish the birthdate of pulps is more difficult than trying to do the same with newspaper comic strips. Everyone has a different piece of evidence. In editing The Pulps in 1970, Tony Goodstone avoided the issue because of the confusion.

One of the famous questions put to trivia fans is, "What character has appeared in the Movies-TV-comics-pulps-radio-and newspapers?" The question is a loaded one. The answer is The Shadow. Street and Smith, of course, published the pulps, Blue Coal sponsored him on radio, Victor Jory played him for Columbia pictures in the serial, the aforementioned Street and Smith, as well as Radio and DC, did the comic books, the chapter play found itself on TV in various parts of the country. Now the catch.

continued next page

Australia had its own "Shadow," a quite different character. He appeared in some of their newspapers during WWII as reprints of the comic book. I don't believe the Shadow ever appeared in the United States in newspapers.

While on the subject, I've said several times in my column for RBCC that the reason why pulp characters never succeeded in comic books is that it takes many more pages to bring out the real impact and meaning that the pulps themselves did. Marvel realized that when they put Doc Savage into a black and white slick format.

Enough. One thing is certain. The Pittsburgh Comix Club's PITTCON '77 will never go down in history as pulp fiction. Only Gentle Ben will. . . .

* * *

And Now, A Word From Our. . .
Ron Kienzle

First, some apologies for the mix-up in my last column. The last paragraph should state that the profit per page is .43 ¢ (point fourty-three) for the thrity cent books and .57 ¢ for the fifty cent books. For the new 35¢ books, the profit per page increases to .50 cents (one half cent) or, a 116% increase. Increasin g the fifty cent books to sixty cents increases profit by 120%, or .68 cents per page. Next, the editor forgot the less than symbols (<) in the equations.

Sorry for the mix-up.

continued next page

In researching a paper, I ordered two science fiction fanzines, Science Fiction Review, and Karass. The SFR is one of the big three in sf fanzines, with Algol and Locus. It is a professionally produced newsprint zine. The editor and publisher, Richard E. Geis, is a libertarian who tends toward the "conspiracy theory of history." He also has a split personality, named Alter-Ego, a strange looking alien. He shares Geis's libertarian tendencies to a greater degree. What can you expect from an alien chained in the recesses of an sf fan's mind?

SFR contains reviews of science fiction books and fanzines by Geis, Alter, and many other notables of sf fandom. It usually has an interview with an sf writer, as well as contributions from pro writers. The rest of the zine is made up of letters, replies to letters, both by pros and fans, and Geis's personal comments, put in diary format.

SFR is a somewhat strange zine, but those who would like to get a taste of sf fandom with little cost would do well to try this zine. Subscriptions are $4.00 for a year, $7.00 for two years, and a single copy costs $1.25. For foreign subscriptions, contact me or Geis/ Science Fiction Review / P. O. Box 11408 / Portland, Or. 97211.

Karass is a newszine published by Linda E. Bushyager. It has news about the industry, fanzines, cons, changes of address, and the like. It also contains an occasional review or two.

Karass's format is similar to that of Pittsburgh Fan Forum, but is produced using a Gestetner and Gestafaz system (No, it would not help lower PFF's cost. Gestetner's cost over a thousand dollars.) on a semimonthly basis, which means that I don't know exactly what sequence she is using, but the two issues I have are dated Dec. 1976/Jan. 1977 and Feb. 1977. For those interested, send $2.00 for five issues or 40¢ for a sample to Linda Bushyager / 1614 Evans Avenue / Prospect Park, Pa. 19076.

Next item: no more colleges. If we are going to hold a con again in 1978, and we can't get a hotel or motel, let's make sure we don't lose our location less than two months before the con.

Fourth, money willing, I am going with our leader to the San Diego con. I must repeat Jack McGonicle's warning:

If you want to spend a lot of money on books, San Diego may not be the con to attend. It will cost about $200 round trip air fare. The bus and train may cost about seventy to eighty dollars less, but take three days each way. As for myself, I didn't go to last July's New York con to buy much, and I am not going to San Diego to buy much. I just want to see the west coast and this seems to be a good way to do it.

* * *

GARY SASSAMAN=
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PHONE: 717-668-0156.

Editor's note: this issue PFF starts a column by its next editor (Lerer won't be around forever!), editor of Comics And Fandom #2, one of our backbone members, and an artist who doesn't describe himself as an artist. Gary Sassaman's views on the business and esthetic aspects of comics, we feel, you'll find fresh and interesting. And if not, there goes one column.

In one of Joe Brancateeli's recent columns in the Warren books, Mr. B. came up with the brilliant idea of totally eliminating 50% or more of the comic book titles on the stands today. He said that "I'd be willing to wager that if Marvel and National each cut their number of titles by fifty or more percent, their profits would not only increase as percentage of sales, but also in terms of actual dollars. Sales of the remaining titles m ight improve from 40% to maybe 60 or 70 % of the press run without adding a dime to the cost."

It's very logical that, by taking away most of the comics, the remaining ones will increase in sales. After all, the average comic book buyer is a random one. It's the interesting cover that counts -- daddy's in a hurry so I better quick grab one. I'm sure there are a lot of kids who buy a few titles regularly but comics is a primarily hit-and-miss game. One issue 's sales figures might be up, the next month, down.

Comics are a medium of repetition. If one Spiderman book sells, why not two? If two— how about three? And how 'bout a reprint issue? And if four Spidey books a month sell, well, how about a daily comic strip?

I know, I know. Comics are like movies and TV. Next year I imagine we'll have twenty cop shows with beautiful thick-haired, blazing white-teethed beauties strutting their stuff in front of the cameras. "If it worked once....

But what Branc fails to realize is, that by pruning off fifty percent of the comics tree, you also cut off fifty per cent of the artists and writers and production people. That's not a hell of a lot of people-- and maybe this would get rid of some of the hacks-- but it might also get rid of some real talent— new talent— and we'd be stuck with the older reliables and comics would become a closed door to new talent and ideas.

So what's the anser?

Consolidation, in dollar-sized books. Yes, I know, I can't see myself buying fifty or eighty $1 books each month. But I would buy a $1 book that oombined the Amazing Spiderman, Spectacular Spider Man, and Marvel Team-Up. Or Conan, Kull, and Red Sonja. Do you see what I mean by consolidation? It's cutting down the number of titles by 2/3 as three become one. So we end up paying ten cents extra. But it's better than paying $1 each for three books.

continued next page

s also helps solve the distribution
m. As the ever-lovely Jeanette
aid a few months ago in her edit-
this puts the comics on a com-
e level with Time magazine. Why
a dealer-- excuse me, a retailer,
is a dirty word to me too-- take
ace to display comics when he
splay one copy of Playboy and get
me profits?

st important-- to me, at least--
an keeps the comics open to new
. They'd still be producing the
number of pages, and all the people
would be needed, and new artists and writers would be as in demand as they are now. It also makes the introduction of new titles and characters easier. If you want something like the 3-D Man to get off the ground, throw it in a $1 book with a best-seller.

What do you think?

Next time, we'll take a look at Jeanette Kahn and what's been happening at DC. See you at PITTCON!

* * *

GARY SASSAMAN

An Interview With Steve Gerber

Part 1

The following interview was held on July 4, 1976 at the New York Comic Art Convention for the PCC by Mark Lerer. Together with its conclusion, which will appear in subsequent issues of PFF, the interview is complete and uncut.

M: Some of your editors have accused you of not writing commercially.

G: Is that true? Which editors have accused me?

M: Several editors at Marvel have stated that Steve Gerber is an example of a writer who does not write commercial material.

G: I think it's blatantly untrue. The sales of the DEFENDERS are now very similar to what they were when Len was writing the book and when Steve Englehart was writing it earlier. They've not risen significantly, granted, but they haven't dropped either. The MAN-THING book one could say was uncommercial, but on the other hand, the book lasted almost forty issues before it was dropped. HOWARD THE DUCK, frankly, as far as percentages are concerned, is doing better than most Marvel comics.

M: Are the HOWARD THE DUCK sales figures accurate, though?

G: As we speak today, we have semi-final figures on the first two issues and flash figures on the third. Flash figures are preliminary figures-- they don't mean a lot, except that there's a strange consistency to all those figures. It's hugging the fifty per cent mark. yeah, those figures look reliable. It's selling. People are buying the duck. Not just dealers, that was the question.

M: What do you think could have caused this misunderstanding about being commercial?

G: It's not a question of misunderstanding; it's a question of mistaken preconceptions about what is commercial and what is not. As much as it pains me to say this, a lot of people in the field-- how shall I put this?-- have rather narrow ideas about what will or will not sell. That, of course, is the definition of commercial: "will it sell?".

My own belief always has been that there's a lot of commercial stuff that nobody's ever done before, that just because a book is different it is not uncommercial, it is not "self-indulgent"-- that's one of the editors' favorite terms-- that there's a lot of unexplored territory yet to be covered. And frankly, as badly as many of the so-called "commercial" books are doing right now, we owe it to ourselves to explore that territory.

M: Can you give me some examples of territory that isn't being explored?

G: It's the sort of thing that you stumble on as your work progresses. The duck is one example, simply an idea that hadn't been tried before. I'm working on another series idea right now that will probably sell to an underground that has a vague resemblance to a romance book, but isn't really. It's not an

adventure book either and it's not a superhero and it's not a barbarian; it doesn't fit neatly into any category. And I think this is another possibility. It's difficult to give examples because we're talking about infinity! We've explored such a narooW spectrum ofpossibilities in the comics that name anything and it's virtuallycertain it's not been done!

ML: Your comment on untried-fields-that-might-work-commercially reminds me of Stan Lee's speech about what he was trying to do with the Fantastic Four.

SG: I think that's something that everyone at Marvel has lost sight of. Stan hit on a formula, more or less accidentally. As you know if you've read the Origins of Marvel Comics books, (and as nearly as I can determine the story about Spiderman was true) AMAZING FANTASY was about to be cancelled. Stan had this crazy little idea that he wanted to try once, never expecting anything to come of it. A superhero had never been done exactly that way before, it sold, and suddenly there was a new commercial possibility opened. But the problem is that Marvel writers and artists have been mining this same vein for fifteen years. Stan is one of the few people who recognizes the necessity for change in comics. Sometimes he's a little more timorous about it than I would like, less adventuresome and courageous about experimenting in new fields than I would like , but then he has the pressure of the corporate organization on him, too. If Stan were truly unleashed, I don't know what we'd see!

ML: You also mentioned yesterday that you were friendly with Stan. How far does that rapport extend? How involved are you with Stan's ideas?

SG: It's a business friendship. It hasn't extended into any social areas yet. But we talk. We discuss things. We've had our arguments, definitely, including a couple of fairly bitter ones; Stan has been aggravated with me, I've been aggravated with him, tempers have flaired-- sure, that has happened. But overall we have been able to talk to each other as reasonable human beings, and adults, about things like the possibilities for future books, the duck, and projects like the Kiss comic.

I find Stan very enjoyable to talk to. This is a hard thing for me to say without sounding almost gushing, but Stan doesn't realize quite how much genious resides within his own brain. He tends to underestimate his achievements in comics. This is also difficult to say in print, but I recognize that Stan has certian limitations that I don't. I also have limitations that Stan doesn't; it works both ways. I really respect what he has done over fifteen years in the comics. He has totally revolutionized the industry! He turned it around from something that was dying and really ready to go under into, if not a growth industry, at least something that's hanging on and surviving in the market place. The greatest danger is that people who only know or only desire to copy Stan Lee are going to put the industry exactly back where it was before the fist issue of SPIDERMAN ever appeared.

ML: Is that happening now?

SG: Yes, it is. And Stan, naturally, has commercial instincts that fight his artistic instincts at every turn. He recognized that Spiderman sold, Thor sold, Iron Man sold-- you can go through the whole list of Marvel comics and it seems to be a viable commercial formula, and it is! For certain books. His tendency is to stay within the safe territory also, because he's risking

the company's money every time he ventures out. I hope that comes off as a compliment to Stan.

ML: I think it does.

SG: It is how it's intended, really.

One of the most frustrating experiences I've had recently in comics was sitting down with Stan and Marv Wolfman who was editor at that time, working on the concept of the Ms. Marvel character. What happened, to me, was unbelievable. I went in there with the intent of making very few suggestions of my own, because of the lesson I had learned from Siegel and Shuster. Just when ever I heard an idea I like I was going to say, "Yeah, yeah, let's do that." What happened in the course of an hour session was Stan came up, right off the top of his head, with about a dozen or more conceptions of a female superhero character that had never been done in comcis before, and rejected all of them because they were too different from what was already successful! The man has a marvelous imagination. He doesn't have enough faith in it.

ML: Have you said this to Stan?

SG: I don't know how to say it to Stan. I hope he reads this interview.

ML: Ok. The Steve Gerber personna has developed, I think, more than that of any other writer or artist in comics today.

SG: Really?

ML: I would think so.

SG: Am I a star??

ML: In a way you are! The name Steve Gerber has become synonymous with bizarreness or doing crazy things--

SG: Noncommerciality?

ML: Noncommerciality would seem implied. Any comments?

: I don't know! I just wonder what it says. I am still working in comics and the books are still selling. A lot of the other people who have become stars in the business seem to have either left or faded or something. I don't know! I have never thought of myself that way. I find it very difficult to think of myself that way. I don't see myself as possessing any charisma or anything.

ML: Surely you read the letter pages! Some fan publications--

: I do read the fan letters, but I try to read them-- the cliche-- "between the lines." If somebody says in fan letter," you are a genius," it means likes a particular issue very much. Something you find out quickly is that you produce one clunker-- if nobody likes HOWARD THE DUCK number eight, then matter how good the last seven issues have been, and no matter how good nine is going to be, the letters will say, "God, this book is going down ! What's the matter! Where is Steve Gerber's inspiration! What happened to Colan's artwork! Why didn't it mesh! Why did Leialoha ink with a toothbrush!" The instant assumption is that the whole thing is collapsing just because everybody had an off day. And it's not true! Similarly, the hyperbole

seems to come naturally to fans from years and years of reading things like the Marvel Bullpen page.

Evrything in comics is the most, the best, the farthest out, the weirdest, the most cosmic; there's no "just cosmic" or "just ok" stuff; everything is superlatives, and the fan have become almost trained to write like that. There is not much restraint in fan letters, not much controlled praise. You have to take everything with a grain of salt. And I do. But I do look to the fan letters for a sort of barometer of what's going on in the books and the reaction to it whether it be positive or negative, and also for certain hidden meanings. Somevery good ideas for stories have come out of the fan mail.

ML: If you do take the letters at least that seriously, then surely you have noticed the reputation you have gotten for doing crazy things. You <u>have</u> done crazy things!

SG: Yeah, I think I have a reputation-- and the thing I find so hard to understand about it is that what I write doesn't seem that crazy to me.

The duck, to me, was not an incredibly whacked-out concept. The Bozos and the Headmen and Nebulon and those crazy characters were not-- to me, that's what comic books <u>should</u> be! I have trouble understanding fans and pros alike who can accept a human being who can burst into flame, a thunder god, a guy who's built out of orange lumps, then look askance at a duck in the real world! If we are willing to suspend our disbelief in order to allow these fantasy creatures in to work their magic on our imaginations, why not do likewise for slightly stranger creatures?

ML: Is that what you meant when you said in a FOOM interview, "I spend a lot of time (writing) breaking conventions wherever I can find them?"

SG: Yeah. One of the things I'm always tempted to do when I'm looking a cliche in the face is to bend it out of shape slightly. Not even a lot! Just slightly! Do something that is a little bit unexpected. If you look at the Marvel books now, and the National books, too-- this is not a criticism which is confined to Marvel by any stretch of the imagination.

Marvel books, by the way-- let me say this to clear up what might otherwise sound like an attack against all my fellow Marvel writers-- the Marvel books are light years ahead of the National books, in my opinion. In both quality and originality of conception. The National books have not progressed at all in the last ten years that I can see. In fact, they seem to have regressed quite a bit, back to a stage of such simplicity that even Mort Weisinger would be embarrassed. The Marvel books, on the other hand, may not have made significant advances in terms of thematic matter, but they have made very, very visible advances in terms of style. Writers like Len, Marv, Roy, Gerry-- I could go on to name half a dozen more-- <u>are</u> bringing an original style of writing to comics. Marvel artists, by and large, are still the best storytellers in the business, whether they do very conventional things like John Buscema, or the wiggier things like Starlin or Milgrom or that ilk. There's still no comparison in my mind between the two companies. Where were we going with this??

ML: Staring cliches in the face--?

SG: Yeah. But I have seen Spiderman battle Doctor Octopus two hundred times! I've seen Thor battle the Mangog for ten years. Faced with something like that, faced with a villain like Nebulon or Xemnu the Titan, or a group like the Headmen, my first impulse is to do something I haven't read before! Otherwise, I could just go back and steal the dialogue from Stan's stuff which was perfectly competent, perfectly good, and still sells as well as anything in reprint, and write the same story again-- why not?

ML: Why then are the stories of Spidey battling Doctor Octopus and Thor battling the Mangog still selling the best of all the comics Marvel puts out?

SG: Ok, because there is still a certain basic appeal to that sort of stuff. Also because there is a turnover in readership in those books. The kids who are reading SPIDERMAN now are not by and large the kids whowerereading it ten years ago. But what this also implies is that the comics have no way of hanging on to a readership for longer than a period of about four or five years. With the exception of fandom-- this is why you can't take fandom's opinions as gospel. The rest of the readership changes constantly. Most of the people now reading SPIDERMAN were never acquainted with Gwen Stacy. Mary Jane has been his girlfriend for as long as they've been reading the book. They only know about Gwen through the reprints in MARVEL TALES.

That's the reason. It is still very entertaining for somebody coming into comics for the first time. But after four or five years of that stuff, it becomes tiring. This is why the comics audience can't expand at this point, becuase there is very little besides the standard superhero stuff that comics have to offer them.

ML: And you're saying that the types of things you are writing are the way to expnad the audience? Is there a way?

SG: I don't know if they're the way; they might be a way. I'm very cautious about trying to pin down the way to do anything. I think part of the problem with this business is that too many people have already done that. Every editor, every writer in this business knows the way to do comic books! If you ask them and press them, you'll find out there is no other way. Well, that's what I don't believe. It would be hypocritical for me to say I know the way to open up comic books to a new market. I don't know if it's possible myself! I'm so convinced of and frustrated by the limitations of the medium that I'm not sure if there's a way to open up to a new market.

(continued next issue)

GABRIELE
& Ko.

Heroes

by David S. Sims

Long ago, when the world was considerably younger, monsters roamed the countryside and lurked in the dark and silent depths of the forest. As a rule, these creatures were hideous beasts. Armed with claw and fang, they represented an awful challenge to mankind. They were hated and cursed and scorned. But most of all, they were feared.

For man had yet to erect his monuments of steel and concrete. And technology had not advanced past the flicker of a fire. His armor of science not yet forged, and therefore clad only in the skins of the hunt, man would peer warily into the night and wonder at the ominous sounds and feel the nameless, unspoken terrors of the unknown implode within his skull.

Fear is always greater when its cause is unseen. So in order to battle the cries of the night and the ice in his gut, man would let his mind paint the monsters since his eyes could not. The shadows gained substance. Dragons were born, bedecked with glittering scales of blues and greens. Werewolves, bastard-spawn, gained bristling mane and fetid breath. Vampires, with night-black wings and needle teeth, flew with the evening's winds.

And now it was suddenly easier. Although they were still evil and malignant and very powerful, they had names. Enemies with names could no longer hide behind the curtain of darkness; they could be confronted, and, in time, beaten.

The man of myth was born on the heels of the monsters. The hero, the shimmering demi-god armed with the sword of right, could enter the realms of blackness. He could go where man feared to tread. He slew the dragons in epic battles ; the bite of a silver bullet stopped the werewolves; a sharpened stake reduced the vampires to dust.

The monsters were vanquished and man was free to grow. Cities sprang up, then empires, and the primitive beings of monster and hero gradually admorned themselves with the habiliments of civilization. Barricaded behind the walls of wisdom and science, man felt secure in his world. Inevitably, with the monsters defeated, man thought he had no

need for heroes. Both creations were naished to the fringes of memory. But deep within himself, beneath the worries and frustrations of daily existence, man knows that the monsters still wait.

**

Perhaps you disagree. But men still whistle in the dark and children still cower beneath blankets and there are too many things out there in the night that we still don't know about. Beneath the mask of enlightenment, we still huddle beside our fires and peer warily into the shadows. We have changed, but we are still subject to the devastating influences of the unknown.

The myths, like us, have changed with time. The pomp of our religions, and the unspoken bureaucratic laws of government and business now handle

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the ritualistic rigormarole we are so fond of. But there are elements in our being which are simple and uncluttered and clamoring for fulfillment. We want our emotions stripped of all their accumulated debris. We want to hear love and hate, life and death, good and evil, presented with no subtle shades and all easily discerned.

So we turn to our literature and our films and our daydreams. We read about distant worlds, lost in the immensity of space. Or of ancient lands and steaming jungles and cities of gold. We watch the cowboys shooting outlaws, our police battling crime in the streets, our investigative reprters exposing the corruption of government. Or better still, be both read and see our comic book characters swinging above the city or travelling through time on grand quests.

No, life isn't really the way it's presented in four-color magazines or on reels of celluloid. Life is complicated and sticky. But the myths aren't supposed to deal with actualities. They're to entertain and comfort and make you forget the monsters which haven't been named.

So give us those sword-swinging, gun-slinging, web-spinning type fellows. And maybe because of them, we'll come to agree with noted mythographer Joseph Campbell— "The mighty hero of extraordinary powers... is each of us; not the physical self visible in the mirror, but the king within." (J. Campbell, The Hero With A Thousand Faces)

* * *

"All Around"

column by Ben Pondexter

Because we want to encourage as much communication between comics clubs as possible, I'm listing some of the club publications we receive. All of them deserve your supposrt, and if you want to write or draw, it's a good way to get started.

Fans Of Central Jersey
262 Garner Road
North Brunswick, N. J. 08902
six issues: $1.75
twelve issues: $3.50

Farther Out
Newsletter of the Ashtabula Comics Club
c/o Frank Rizzo
3502 Hiawatha Ave.
Ashtabula, Chio 44004
six issues: #3.00
sample copy: 50 cents

The Panel
Comic Book Club of Ithaca
657 Elmira Road
Ithaca, N. Y. 14850
Subscription: $4.00 per year

Kutztown Comics Club
c/o Paul Stadinger
239 North 9th St.
Allentown, Pa. 18102
(write Paul for prices)

continued next page

Laser Books has suspended publication of its science fiction line. I only read one of them, and was not very impressed. Anyone who knows of some good titles in the line, please contact me.***Glad to see Perry Rhodan has gone back to two stories per book; one was just too quickly read. ***Here is a highly recommended fantasy trilogy: Seabearers, Power Of The Serpent, and Twilight of the Serpent, all by Peter Valentine Fimlett, and currently available from Bantam Books.

Called the DC Hotline on Jan. 27, 1977, and got the voice of Paul Levitz. Mostly Legion news, it sounded very good, and was a big improvement over the first week.***I'm really enjoying the TV Wonder Woman. Now if we can just get rid of the cape and those kangaroo leaps, we'll be in good shape. ***Loved the George Lucas Star Wars! Just what was ordered for my taste in space opera. Looking forward to the movie.

Plans for our fifth Anniversary Edition call for Sheena, Queen of the Jungle, to be the cover girl. A large part of the issue will be devoted to comics history. Let's make it a special one! If you're a new club member, you can receive the fourth Anniversary issue if you contribute two pages to the fifth. ***Over the last two years, I've been enjoying soap operas more and more. They've got to be the best training ground left for TV, too.

See you all at PITTCON '77!!!

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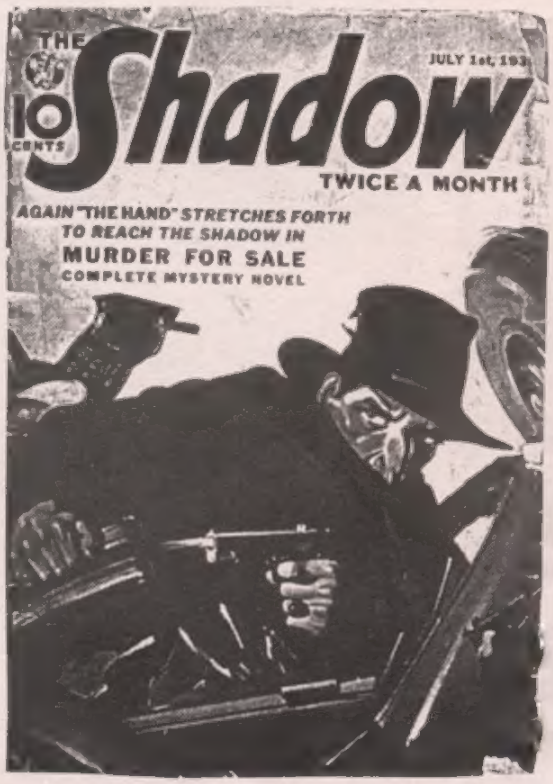
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